

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION AF-10

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FM AMCONSUL KADUNA

TO AMEMBASSY LAGOS

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 4072

C O N F I D E N T I A L KADUNA 0849

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PDEV, NI

SUBJECT: POTENTIAL PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES FROM NORTH

REF: (A) LAGOS 8330, (B) KADUNA 0822

1. IN JULY 7 CONVERSATION ISA KAITA AND PO DISCUSSED POTENTIAL PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES FROM NORTH. KAITA ACKNOWLEDGED THAT SIR KASHIM IBRAHIM WAS CONSIDERED A POTENTIAL CANDIDATE AND CONSIDERS HIM EXCELLENT POSSIBILITY WITH A WIDE POTENTIAL FOLLOWING. HE NOTED IBRAHIM HAS TWO DRAWBACKS: HE IS A KANURI, NOT A HAUSA, AND HIS AGE. KAITA FELT THE DISCUSSION WAS ACADEMIC SINCE HE BELIEVES KASHIM IBRAHIM WILL STEP ASIDE IN FAVOR OF HIS SON-IN-LAW, WAZIRI IBRAHIM. FYI KAITA DESCRIBED KASHIM IBRAHIM AS ONE OF THE OLDER LEADERS WHO WAS BEING CONSULTED MORE FREQUENTLY BY THE SMC, NOTING HE WAS CALLED TO DODAN BARRACKS DURING THE STUDENT CRISIS. END FYI.

2. HE CHARACTERIZED SHEHU SHAGARI AS AN "OBVIOUS LEADER" BECAUSE HE IS FROM SOKOTO (THE TRADITIONAL CENTER OF THE NORTH AND HOME OF THE LATE SIR AHMADU BELLO), EVEN THOUGH HE IS A "COMMONER". SHAGARI'S
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BUSINESS ACUMEN ASSISTS HIM IN THE SOUTH AND HIS WIDESPREAD CONNECTIONS ALL OVER THE COUNTRY SUPPORT HIS CANDIDACY. FROM THE DISCUSSION, IT WAS APPARENT THAT SHAGARI WAS KAITA'S FAVORITE CANDIDATE.

3. INTERESTINGLY, KAITA BELIEVES WAZIRI IBRAHIM WILL GET THE NOD AS THE NORTHERN CANDIDATE. HE

NOTED THAT IBRAHIM HAS MORE ENEMIES THAN SHAGARI, BUT ALSO HAS MORE FRIENDS. HE IS POPULAR AMONG VARIOUS ELEMENTS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY FOR HIS STRONG IMAGE. HE ALSO SAID THAT WAZIRI IBRAHIM HAD MADE HIS FORTUNE DURING THE CIVIL WAR WITH MILITARY CONTRACTS AND STILL MAINTAINS CLOSE CONTACTS WITH THE "ARMY BOYS" WHO SEE HIM FREQUENTLY AND INFORMALLY. THE ARMY CONNECTION APPARENTLY OUTWEIGHS THE DISADVANTAGE OF BEING A KANURI IN KAITA'S EYES.

4. PO NOTED THAT WAZIRI IBRAHIM HAD NOT SPOKEN OUT ON THE SHARIA QUESTION AND ASKED WHETHER THIS WOULD HURT HIS CANDIDACY. KAITA THOUGHT NOT, SAYING THAT IT WAS THE PLACE OF THE "LEARNED MEN"--IMAMS, MALLAMS, ETC.--TO SPEAK ON THIS ISSUE AND IT WAS CORRECT FOR A POLITICAL MAN TO MAINTAIN HIS SILENCE. HE ALSO NOTED THAT THIS POSITION PROBABLY HELPED HIM IN THE SOUTH.

5. WE BRIEFLY DISCUSSED THE LIFTING OF THE BAN ON POLITICS. KAITA EXPRESSED SOME SURPRISE THAT WE HAD HEARD NOTHING SINCE HE HAD HEARD THE BAN WAS TO BE LIFTED THAT DAY--JULY 7. HE UNDERSTANDS THE INTENTION OF THE SMC IS TO LIFT THE BAN SOON AND DOES NOT FEEL APPROVAL OF THE NEW CONSTITUTION IS RELEVANT
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TO THE DECISION SINCE POLITICAL MEETINGS ARE ALREADY TAKING PLACE.

6. COMMENT: SINCE KAITA WAS RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS HE DID NOT MENTION OTHER POTENTIAL CANDIDATES AND THE LIST ABOVE SHOULD NOT BE CONSIDERED EXCLUSIVE. IT WAS CLEAR, HOWEVER, THAT SHEHU SHAGARI IS HIS MAN, BUT HE FEELS THAT WAZIRI IBRAHIM IS THE NORTH'S MAN. ALTHOUGH KAITA IS AN OLDER POLITICIAN, RATHER THAN A MEMBER OF THE "KADUNA MAFIA", WE FIND IT INTERESTING THAT HE FEELS HIS PERSONAL PREFERENCE WHO ACCORDING TO REFTEL IS THE "MAFIA'S" MAN, IS NOT THE LEADING CANDIDATE.
LAKE

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